The power of Pause in enhancing ethical leadership

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Abstract

2020 was replete with complex leadership lessons. Multi-level societal experiences and ethical
issues emerged with unprecedented speed. The global health pandemic known as COVID-19 was
followed by the racial awakening – a response to the underlying pandemic of systemic racism.
Amid this chaos, there was a weekly gathering throughout 2020 with the intention of creating a
safe space for group reflection, dialogue, ethical inquiries and support. An opportunity for a
PAUSE was created, informed in part by the work of Otto Scharmer. Leadership roles became an
object of inquiry in congruence with their humanity. The method of convening, Circle, framed
the support for the engagement and inquiry processes. This article describes how a group of
professionals examined their leadership and sought to apply learnings while supporting one
another – an adaptive leadership response that changed and strengthened their ethical leadership
capacity.

Keywords: Circle, PAUSE, Ethical Engagement, Group Process, Theory U, Action Learning,
Systems Thinking, Adaptive Leadership

Introduction

COVID-19 and racial equality are dual pandemics that are currently affecting organizations and

leaders throughout the United States. The intersectionality of these two pandemics inspired

many leaders to actively evaluate their own leadership behaviors and actions, and their impact as

well as their influence on the larger community. What became clear to many individuals

committed to thriving and learning in the pandemics was that using single leadership model

approaches were not meeting expectations and challenges. In fact, the integration of multiple

leadership models were better able to develop co-created solutions that were responsive, ethical

and timely.

There are multiple mental models and perspectives on who represents a leader. As the

dual pandemics invaded individual lives, families, organizations and communities, the ability to

engage face-to-face to consider strategic plans or project rollouts rapidly disappeared across many sectors in the United States. Suddenly, Zoom, previously a work-related technology platform, became a household word for connecting school, work and social life. The world struggled to connect virtually across urban and rural landscapes. No industry or activity was exempt as Zoom supported the provision of education, music, art, and healthcare. The learning curves for moving and engaging in a virtual environment tested individuals and systems.   In the midst of this initial chaos, leaders at every level were challenged to create viable options for learning, working and connecting for their own personal systems and for the systems in which they have professional responsibilities.

One of the experts on leadership and leaders is Peter Northouse. If leadership is as Northouse explains, a trait, an ability, a skill, a behavior, a relationship and of course, a process of influence, what is the one true model encompassing the best of all these elements when structures are crumbling (Northouse, 2017). Throughout the early months of 2020, rapid decisions were required from formal and informally designated leaders. Northouse credits Ciulla with the definition of ethical leadership as leaders moving others to do the right thing, in the right way, for the right reasons (Northouse, 2017, p. 274).

These pandemics and the resulting and continuing chaos were not the first time that leaders across the globe faced baffling challenges that often tore at the souls of those providing personal healthcare, responsive education, or adequate food. Antoinette Klatzy and Otto Scharmer and the team at the Presencing Institute (2020) were one of the first responders around the call to step into leadership. They issued a global invitation in the second quarter of 2020 to connect virtually individuals across the globe to learn, to ponder, to reflect and to connect. Much was discovered and much is still emerging from the story-telling and the rigorous and respectful

interrogation of what leadership truly entails when fairness, respect, kindness and justice are non-negotiable standards and norms.

It became more evident early in 2020 that leadership in these times is not the work of a manager, a designated CEO or an Executive Director. In fact, it no longer belongs to the C-Suite or the Administrative Team as we have known in the past. While their expertise is certainly needed and invaluable, leadership in 2020 is the best of each of us contributing in an ethical and mindful manner to the challenges, known and unknown. It is imperative to reassess the mental models of what we thought we knew of leaders and leadership, and co-create, test and adjust new models through deliberate action learning. What was clear was that business as usual was in most situations, an unlikely solution for the person, the organization or the community.

Leaders Response

Saybrook University, headquartered in Pasadena, California, is a 50-year-old institution with a long-standing heritage of humanistic learning and engagement. Students and faculty as innovators and cutting-edge thinkers in the complex fields of social justice, psychology, creativity, leadership, systems thinking (Anderson & Johnson, 1997), healthcare, social work, and business have influenced hundreds of organizations and thousands of leaders and leaders of leaders. It is a non-traditional institution of higher learning where thinking outside the box is not only accepted, but expected. The real opportunity in the classrooms and in alumni and faculty gatherings is to co-create astounding boxes without edges, flaps or seals. Innovation is welcomed, failures are expected, and pivots are opportunities for celebrations. Saybrook University has worked to practice models of leadership integration, within the institution and in the greater community. As with any good leadership practice, this level of integration is

emerging and works to adapt to these complicated times we find ourselves living in. It is not a perfect institution, but it was and is perfect for these times, as much as it was 50 years ago when launched.

On March 16, 2020, a professor at Saybrook University offered her students in the Department of Leadership and Management (DLM) an opportunity to participate in a virtual gathering each week. There were no other requirements, only showing up as the unique individual each one is and as they are comfortable, listen respectfully and share the questions they are attempting to answer. As each individual searched for meaning in the confusion of emerging challenges created by the dual pandemics, the membership ebbed and flowed and after about four Monday evenings, settled into a gathering of six individuals. What emerged was a safe place for six people with diverse backgrounds to find solutions to diverse challenges. This became a leadership adventure of listening to models to address current dilemmas. The space allowed for the exploration of integrating the concepts gained in Saybrook's doctoral program in Leadership in Organization Systems, focusing on complexity and systems thinking, diversity and inclusion, leadership, mental models and what it means to be fully human and doing no harm.

Over the months of 2020, the questions in front of the individuals demanded even greater flexibility and complex thinking. Nothing became easier except the knowledge that for some, one time a week, there would be safe space with ethical partners willing to listen to hear, to comment only when it was called for and sometimes, to not say a word for the world had been too overwhelming in just 24, 48 or 72 hours.

Why Gather?

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed, citizens can change the world.

Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has." Margaret Mead (2011)

The reason to gather for our group was at the core of Mead's message. For many, it appeared that in the first quarter of 2020, the reality of COVID-19, became a tsunami in the United States forcing individuals, families, local state and federal legislators, students, businesses and organizations to declare again and again that there were no clear answers. In fact, questions were equally unclear and held significant ethical implications and ramifications: Should my child be sent to school? If I don't send my child to school, how will I feed them? Should I run for office when I need to shake hands and talk 1:1 with neighbors? Should I wear a mask if I ride my bike or if I walk the trails with other people around? Should I fly across the country to be with an elderly parent facing a physical challenge? Should I hold a birthday party for my 5-year-old? Should I join the BLM (Black Lives Matter) protest march to support a cause brewing for decades? Can I be kind to those who disagree with me on matters that matter? If we use yoga mats for grades 1-3, will children maintain the space required between humans? How can I even begin to understand the political landscape and the gaping and growing chasms of political alignment around me and coalescing around my dinner table?

These questions and many more impacted each individual within this experience. The questions, confusion and tensions became more tangible for each in the group. The political situation, while not the topic of this article, was a significant contributing factor in the mounting efforts to tackle problems that formally had solutions. What was learned was that the questions without answers caused uncertainty and contributed to feelings of isolation and an epidemic of growing loneliness. Mandates for lock-downs or stay-at-home mandates in many locations only exacerbated the conditions of ambiguity and tensions. Mask wearing remains a topic of

contention with many individuals requesting the cloth covering while others maintain their right to a face free of obstacles.

A Leadership Process: Circle

It was in this tumultuous external and internal environment that six leaders gathered virtually on Monday evenings. There were no stated rules, no calls to order, nor an agenda of action items. There was Circle. Circle was derived from work in family systems and according to lore, was refined and defined by a series of leaders and founders from an unorthodox MBA program in Sustainable Systems at BGI/Pinchot University in Seattle, Washington. For over twelve years, the co-founders, Dr. Libba Pinchot and Jill Bamburg, MBA as well as Leadership and Personal Development (LPD) faculty, MBA students and CAIRS (Change Agents in Residence) started meetings and learning cohort gatherings with the process of Circle (Presidio Graduate School, 2020). Every voice matters and is invited into the process. It allows and supports meaningful conversations and mindful explorations where each voice is heard, and yet, silence is honored. Circle itself supports gatherings of six individuals or six hundred. It allows for the inclusivity of ideas, sorrows, innovations, creativity, devastation, and invitations to grow, learn and contribute meaning in our world.

The process of Circle is deceptively simple with seven easily remembered elements captured in Table 1 Each element of the Circle process correlates directly and supports identified factors in ethical leadership as defined by Peter Northouse's (2017) examination of the following seven virtues; Silence - A moment of mindful presence; Voicing your Name - A form of check-in; Appreciations - For a person or an action; New Information - Announcements that

cannot be written; Puzzles - No answer available although the need is weighty; Problems with

Solutions - Note a problem and pose an answer; and Hopes and Dreams - The future envisioned.

Table 1

Leadership through Circle: Factors and Implications of Ethical Leadership

Circle Elements	*Purpose of Elements*	*Implications for Ethical Leadership (Northouse, 2017)*	*Living and Demonstrating the Circle Element*	*Future Considerations*
Silence	Two minutes of silence to support moving to presence	The Actions of the Leader	Willingness to arrive and move into the quiet.	What would intentional embodiment bring?
Voices	Individuals announce their names and respond to an inquiry.	The Values of the Leader	Demonstrated commitment to be present and to listen and hear.	What if we introduced one another?
Appreciations	Establishes a culture of gratitude, positivity and sets the tone for the day, event or study.	The Character of the Leader	Meaningful acknowledgements of people, actions and circumstances	What if creativity was intentionally leveraged in this element?
New Information	Announcements short and crisp and unavailable anywhere else.	The Honesty of the Leader	Commitment to transparent, iterative and timely communication.	What if communication was intentional for all learning ?
Puzzles	Open-ended questions, representing gnarly complex issues- without a response or easy answer	The Goals of the Leader	Demonstrated willingness to stand in adaptive leadership where many answers and no one perfect answer.	What if the speaker paused first in silence to honor the complexity and ended with an appreciation?
Problems with Solutions	Share problems and pose answers or propose to convene a group to answer this issue.	The Actions of the Leader	Demonstration of responsibility and a willingness to co-create.	What if there was action learning in each problem during closure or reporting back?
Hopes and Dreams	Vision for the day, year or future.	The Power of the Leader	Envisioning an emergent future.	What if these are tracked and part of action learning?

Source: This table was adapted from Chess (2020) and summarizes the seven categories that

comprise the Circle Process (adapted from Northouse, 2017).

Each leader in the Circle comes to the table with a different background, perspective and focus of where their leadership practice is challenged and requires an organic evolution. This bounty of diversity has allowed the topics in Circle to be broad and varied, which has enabled the group to have discussions on the application of the most appropriate leadership approach in a variety of organizational settings. Leadership is a complex and messy process, and Circle is a place in which an individual can pause and appreciate the complexity of the challenges and the ethical considerations that we faced in the year 2020. Convening a group of leaders through the strategy of Circle enabled a timely coming together to support one another while looking at the emergent challenges and tactical problems each one faced in diverse industries. Circle was designed to be and is a safe space where leaders can discuss their own ethical quandaries that they face personally or within their employment organization.

Leadership Process: Adaptive Leadership

Just as there is not just one approach to creating space for dialogue and reflection, there are boundless leadership models to choose from and consider, just a few: servant leadership, transactional leadership, mindful leadership, Machiavellian leadership, transformational leadership and the list continues. While each of these leadership models and theories held promise for elements of the crises in front of everyone, they often fell short in critical areas. A foundational leadership model taught in the Department was around adaptive leadership and, in many respects, it stood out as a still innovative model to move conversations forward at every level of an organization.

Introduced by Ronald Heifetz and Marty Linsky (Heifetz et al., 2009), adaptive leadership is the practice of uniquely responding to the changing environment internally and

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externally in the organization. The adaptive leadership process includes observation, interpretation, and intervention (Heifetz et al., 2009). If the system is broken, it must be observed, diagnosed, and fixed. This is done by taking risks and challenging the status quo in order to provoke change. "Adaptive leaders seize the moment and utilize the turbulence to close down dysfunctional practices, reshape the organization, and redefine the work that people do" (Kerfoot, 2009, p. 342).

Another component of adaptive leadership is looking toward the future to anticipate upcoming challenges. Adaptive leadership accepts that things change and that an organization should anticipate and be ready for the change to happen. Circle is an adaptive leadership tool that enhances the inquiry and dialogue between its members. When discussing "problems with solutions", Circle allows for each member to share their observation of a problem of practice, and interpret what that means for their role as a leader.

The tenants of the adaptive leadership as experienced through Circle offered a thoughtful path forward in many situations. It is not the answer and since its inception, it is ripe perhaps for new considerations and enhancements. However, the ability and requirement to consider both the technical elements of a situation with the one right answer and the adaptive opportunities where multiple responses could suffice is the complex leadership process skill demanded in these days of the pandemics.

Leadership: As Action

Here then is the narrative of six intrepid and tenacious learners committed to interrogating ethical behavior, unearthing known and unknown mental models and growing individual and collective leadership at a pace unheard of in higher education. They agreed knowingly and unknowingly to

laugh and to cry together. They found themselves supporting decisions to engage in difficult conversations with friends and family members. They found themselves checking in with one another between the Monday gatherings to unleash joy, tribulations and triumphs.

Since its inception, these individuals have gathered virtually in over 40 Monday evening Circles. Together, they have articulated well over 200 appreciations in the midst of the unheard-of chaos. Over 100 untenable puzzles have been surfaced, those events or actions where no plausible answer is evident or, being taken as in the murder of George Floyd or Breonna Taylor or the devastating impact of COVID-19 on families and communities. They have called out over 200 hopes and dreams in the race to higher ground to announce and pronounce intentions to ameliorate injustice, eliminate unnecessary and unethical behavior or eradicate clutter in our minds where only clear thinking and action have room to thrive.

Every person around the Circle pushed to new and uncomfortable frontiers. In every learning opportunity, welcomed and unwelcomed, the north star of ethical behavior, actions and reactions prevailed. One member ran for the first time for public office and another co-sponsored a virtual gathering of 100 Voices to tell and to listen to stories that define through the lens of racial and cultural identity. There were failures of systems and of hearts. There were tears of joy and laughter. Some nights, the seat was vacant, but the space and perspectives of the individuals were vivid and totally present.

Inclusivity was taken to new levels. There were celebrations of success in completing chapters in a dissertation, of a business re-opening and then, closing more effectively a second time and of a virtual plenary session on Adaptive Leadership at the Intersections, including the reminder that kindness matters. And, political actions taking place in the United States were viewed through ever- more complex lenses of comprehension. How do we thoughtfully, rapidly,

and sustainably scale *a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens to change the world?* Here, in part is how this healing bridge building continued to evolve.

Leadership: An Invitation

Every member of the Circle taught, wrote about, and practiced leadership. Every leader around the virtual circle had failed in some of these endeavors and challenged themselves to learn from the adventure or misadventure. Quitting has not been an option. The seat in Circle is always held because the space is needed for the silence, the assurances, the powerful questions and the reflective time to consider options, to test the ethical implications and to choose the very best of the many possible answers to intractable issues.

There continue to be certain theories, compelling writers and endless puzzles to call on us as whole beings alive and accountable in a world in the throes of mind-bending change. At times, the tsunami won and the Circle was overrun with confrontations of the human character in public that were unbearable. At other times, the tsunami lost and hope prevailed, mindful actions were taken. What was key in both actions and in everything in between, was the *pause.* Often, leaders believe that they are accountable in a crisis for the answer in rapid-fire fashion. As we considered adaptive leadership from the theoretical knowledge of academics such as Ronald Heifetz, Alexander Grashow and Marty Linsky (2009), authors of, *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership: Tools and Tactics for Changing Your Organization and World*, we learned that responses could be transformed into possibilities for practical, day-to-day actions.

It was becoming legitimate in the pandemics to have many answers for one problem without clear insight into the one right answer. Becoming an adaptive leader was critical. Instead of spending time on the balcony with a view into a strategic plan for 2022 or, insight into

the answers to keeping a small business afloat, or on the dancefloor responding to technical issues like completing a document to run for office, each member of the Circle discovered they had to be two places at once. In many ways, everyone is learning to be tactical strategists every moment of the day. Skill is growing in being two places at once: knowing the technical response and the willingness to sit in the ambiguity of many right answers.

Despite or perhaps, because of the reality of COVID-19 related deaths, each moment became sacred. It became essential to be skilled at sitting in reflection and acting with precision when a clear technical response was available. The PAUSE actually contributed to this growing realization and skill of discernment: one answer or, many possible responses. This integration of PAUSE and adaptive leadership is derived from Otto Scharmer (2008) in which he looks at the core leadership question of, "what is required in order to learn and act from the future as it emerges?" (p. 14). Scharmer (2008) believes that leadership is a process of three movements "observe; access your sources of stillness and knowing; and act in an instant" (p. 56). Within these movements, there are seven leadership capacities - holding the space, observing, sensing, presencing, crystallizing, prototyping, and performing - that allow for a space on inquiry, reflections and action.

As a reminder, each Circle begins with silence, time to allow each individual to come into the virtual space and be present. The events of the day or the hour are parked outside the Circle. Attention and focus on self and others in the Circle is the ethical challenge. Calming the churning minds to hear, to listen and not to speak, to listen to what it is time for now, and to be in the essence of now are all called out in the preamble to Circle. In many ways, it is a pause out of time and offers an opportunity to hear our own souls breathe in, and out. To PAUSE in a space together, Circle allows for a collaborative response to chaos through the adaptive leadership

framework. The invitation to participate, to clarify unique personal intentions, and to honor the humanity of each individual voice occurs in each meeting in Circle Space. Through a structured yet adaptive format, Circle moves through a space that checks in with each individual and then delves into problems, problems with solutions and hope and dreams. This practice known as Circle opens and closes the reflective practice and journey each leader took during that time. Furthermore, the space in the middle circle, was held for those who could not attend but would be joining in thought.

This practice of intentionally pausing in Circle with one another is a practice that builds and strengthens a habit of pausing, breathing, considering, and maintaining awareness in the present moment of everyday life - the habit of taking note of a potential tsunami wave or the whisper of the need for hope in a bleak moment, and developing the presence of mind to recognize joy rather than only seeing the problems. To realize that in that moment when one feels inadequate that one is indeed exactly what is appropriate for the moment if one is attuned and aware.

The power of PAUSE is a business approach for adapting and responding to chaos. As leadership challenges evolve, adaptive leadership not only looks at leadership theory, but at biology and evolution theory to help the organization and community adapt. Organizations must be willing to experiment and diversify, not only to adapt to the current change, but to predict what future change will occur (Heifetz et al., 2009). Adaptive leadership also looks at stakeholders as critical in being part of the process. A challenge for adaptive leaders is to identify ways to include the stakeholders. "To mobilize stakeholders to engage with your change initiative, you have to identify their strongest values and think about how supporting your program would enable your stakeholders to serve those values" (Heifetz et al., 2009, p. 92).

There is a correlation to strategic thinking and the "balcony view" that leaders must thoughtfully consider.

Leadership: A Mandate for Action Learning

Because there were many answers and many responses to murky situations, action learning introduced in the 1940s by Reg Revans (Marquardt, 2011) also became a mantra of this Circle: committed individuals pondering complex and gnarly issues, leveraging just-in-time ethically-based decisions and giving the grace to crash at times, learn and pivot.
Action Learning with the six identified components could be considered a key tool for the ambiguity surrounding most situations in 2020. These conundrums ranged from canceling pre-scheduled conferences, hugging friends, meeting family over holiday meals, holding difficult conversations when bridging the chasms of political beliefs or, declaring the masks were not necessary for your health or mine.

Leadership: The Process of the PAUSE

In this moment of great societal transformation, how can we use what is familiar within our systems while understanding the power of the unseen to adapt to our future? Otto Scharmer (2008) described one of the processes within the TheoryU movement, as the idea of prototyping, which reflected a method to connect the intelligence of the heart to the learning and intention of the individual. Two aspects of Scharmer's prototyping focused on the inner work of recognizing what is not known and what is disconnected (Borges, 2020). This method is foundational for leaders looking to respond to change. Asking what is not known is an important and reflective part of the PAUSE process and was present often within the CIRCLE experience. Pausing and

reflecting, and sensing into a moment, can look much different than confidently addressing disruption, which is a familiar pattern of leadership, that works to tackle that which is observable and represents common strategies. The current crises we are facing are presenting unspoken and unseen circumstances in all aspects of community and challenging leaders to adjust thinking and methods.

Wicked problems are those difficult issues that leaders must address, but are especially complicated as there are many factors that influence the basic problem itself (Probst and Bassi, 2014). The wicked problems that need attention NOW; include our global pandemic, the racial reckoning we are confronting and the environmental changes we are facing in all parts of the world and within every season. Leaders and followers are being called to find new ways to prioritize values and clarify purpose and work together. Finding methods to deal with the observable, the unspoken and unseen is of utmost importance, in need of prototyping different ways to respond to our emerging challenges.

A common visual that helped and supported this transforming thinking is the Iceberg model. In real life, icebergs pose dangers to traveling mariners, are studied for their clues to systemic collapse and are constantly impacted by outside influences, affecting their shape, size and stability. These foundational ideas relate well to organizational thinking and have produced a recognizable visual metaphor within organizational development work (Cunliff, 2018). Iceberg pictures and drawings have been used repeatedly to represent the visibility levels of problems within complex systems. The Iceberg model represents static moments of known and unknown, where unseen elements below the surface are often unchecked and yet heavily impact the system (Cunliff, 2018). One benefit of using the Iceberg model has been the ability to recognize the whole system that is being evaluated and potentially aim to recognize what is not

known or unseen. The drawback of the Iceberg model is that the visual gives the impression that the version of the system being examined is static. As with all things in nature, icebergs are never just static.

It is time to rethink the dynamics of the Iceberg model and include uncovering what is below the surface and valuable to the entire system. The dynamics of icebergs include constant fluctuations and shifts in balance. Influences are always at work, creating small changes that lead to eventual massive shifts in perspective (Jones, 2014). Icebergs which flip, expose different versions of the larger body, which often come about in a very dramatic and rapid way. Shifts of equilibrium continue through the life of an iceberg, inspiring those using this model to know the process will always include shifts of what is exposed and what is hidden. The CIRCLE process explored the process of 'flipping' and gave the members varying new perspectives of observable, unspoken and unseen. Could this process of PAUSE and reframing the idea of the mental model of the iceberg help leaders go beyond what is known, to discover what is hidden and increase their aptitude of responsiveness.

PAUSE as a Method for Adaptive Leadership

As noted earlier, the intentional practice of PAUSE[ing] within the Circle group begins building the habit of pausing in the midst of real-life situations. In that moment of (1) silent pause you can take a moment, a breath, to establish mindful presence and awareness. Then give (2) a voice to your presence in the space by stating your name audibly or silently, thus recognizing your personal presence and power in that moment. Next (3) you can notice what exists in the moment that can be appreciated. This may include the people involved or the unique circumstances of the moment. Appreciation can be followed by looking for the (4) new information that may not be

readily apparent, and (5) noticing what puzzle exists in the moment without trying to solve it. Next (6) you might consider what present problems seem to have solutions, and finally, (7) how might you envision the desired outcome of this moment or event.

Freedom to be an Ethical Leader

Practicing and using this method of PAUSE can free an individual leader from the tangle of chaotic circumstances, allowing space for consideration of ethical decisions regarding what words and actions will be most beneficial in the moment to facilitate a desirable outcome. The PAUSE provides a choice of thought and action, not automatic reaction. The moments provided by the PAUSE give one the opportunity to mindfully decide and move into mindful action. As we learned and experienced over and over, there are often many right answers in the midst of complexity. As William James stated, "an act has no ethical quality whatever unless it be chosen out of several all equally possible" (n.d.)

PAUSE as a leadership concept can be used in both a traditional and adaptive leadership organization. The beauty of PAUSE is that the adaptive process is derived out of Circle protocol that can give its' participants comfort in a predictable process. Over time, the participation and process becomes more adaptive, molding and adjusting itself to the needs of the group. One way in which this has been introduced into traditional hierarchical organizations is by introducing elements of Circle into various meetings such as committees or departmental and unit meetings. Many have participated in groups where the concepts were used with other labels. For instance, one might begin a meeting with a quiet moment to breathe and notice who is in the room or around the table.

Another instance of bringing Circle into traditional organizations is to practice bringing every voice into the space through some form of sharing one's name and a relevant piece of information. Appreciations are useful in this way as each voice is heard expressing something that was poignant and positive when voiced in the form of an appreciation. Experimenting with components builds familiarity with a slightly different way of being in a group setting, helping the group become accustomed to difference without it feeling disruptive and startling. Over time the process can be expanded as the participants become more comfortable with the format. While we work together to rebuild organizations post-COVID, this approach may represent one solution to inspire cohesion, increase creative sharing of ideas and enable new and promising practices for effective engagement.

As we practice Circle, holding space for one another as members, it also helps us to practice holding space for others in our organizations and our world. This pause is necessary not only for the people that are functioning in a leadership role, but also each member of our communities and world. It is an invitation to each person in our concentric and interconnected circles of influence to join in the process of PAUSE as we continue our work together.

Leadership: A Journey without Destination

Are we done yet? Is normal right around the corner? When can we stop the constant learning and pivots? When might we have a week or two of only technical problems with one clear, evidence-based answer? Some of these hopes and dreams may be emerging. The truth of the matter is that ethical leadership, learning, working in collaboration and trust and committing to the PAUSE, requires disciplined training and laughter-filled celebrations. Our work continues to demand focus and intentionality. Coaching and feedback to one another, often through the art

and grace of listening, remains critical. What we do offer is Circle. Take time to contemplate your intention. Gather 6-10 colleagues and start your journey. We recommend these leadership processes and approaches. We recommend an immersion in the soft skills like listening to hear and pausing to discern. We actually believe these are the authentic and true hard skills for any leader and they are paramount for ethical leaders.

Finally, PAUSE. Allow *patience* to inform the process of engaging with wicked problems. Take a*ction i*n collaboration with the wisdom of diverse voices informing the work. *Understanding* what is above and below the iceberg requires that you individually and collectively flip the tundra. *Sustain* your commitment to coaching and learning.

Our mental models get in our way and cloud the path and through trusted allies, our sight improves. *Ethical* rigor is the leadership we must demand and expect as we are thrust into a new world, with new work in unexplored systems. May you join us as ethical leaders exploring adaptive leadership in new ways and building our learning capacity through Circle and other approaches to gathering as committed citizens.

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